

Identity and Social Cohesion in Print  
A Historical Outline of Meiji Serialized Novels

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores the development of newspapers and serialized novels in Meiji era Japan (1868 – 1912). A theoretical discussion of the role of newspapers in the evolution of culture and society provides background for an analysis of the history and development of the newspaper in Japan. The primary focus is on the rapid development of newspapers and their contribution to the extensive changes in society during the Meiji period. Newspapers both contributed to and were influenced by the development of Japanese society. Finally, the paper applies the theoretical understanding and historical perspective to the analysis of two Meiji serialized novels, one from the beginning of Meiji and one from the end of the era. These novels reveal that Meiji Japan was concerned with creating a general public and establishing an image of a “Japanese nation” that had not previously existed. *Takahashi Oden yasha monogatari* (1878-1879), by Kanagaki Robun (1829 – 1894), shows how society excluded groups in order to strengthen the majority of people’s identification with Japanese society’s norms at the beginning of Meiji. *Kokoro* (1914), by Natsume Sōseki (1867 – 1916), uses the shared experience of the death of Emperor Meiji to pull all Japanese into an inclusive social group, and solidify the image of what it meant to be part of Japan in the modern era.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this paper to my grandmother for her inspirational example and my mother for her continuing love and support.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis will explore the changes that occurred in Japanese newspapers and serialized novels over the course of the Meiji period (1868 – 1912). Over the Meiji period, the newspaper was introduced, adapted, and expanded from its origins as a foreign import to a modern, thriving institution. Simultaneously, serialized novels shifted from earlier Edo modes of narration to modern narration. Despite all this change, both stories reflect a drive to unify Japanese society and culture. The paper will progress from a theoretical position to a historical outline and then to apply those positions to a diachronic analysis of two practical examples: *Takahashi Oden yasha monogatari* (1878-1879), by Kanagaki Robun (1829 – 1894), and *Kokoro* (1914), by Natsume Sōseki (1867 – 1916).

In order to approach these two works with the proper perspective, it is necessary to lay a framework to support and guide the discussion. The paper is broken into roughly three sections: the first deals with the theoretical position, the second with the historical and social transition in Japanese newspapers over Meiji, and the third with a historically oriented analysis of *Takahashi Oden* and *Kokoro*. These sections are further divided to provide structure and a clearer understanding.

To begin, the theoretical framework will outline a general theory that will be used in the analysis to provide a position from which to approach the two works. The object of the theoretical section is to discuss

the interaction among literature, politics, and the citizenry in order to explore how writing influences cultural change. In the context of this discussion, society can be broadly divided into three institutions: government, public, and the mass-media. This paper focuses on the relationships among these three institutions.

The second section, historical background, will detail the progress of newspapers in Japan over the course of Meiji. The goal of this section is to provide a narrative of the Japanese newspaper industry throughout the course of Meiji in order to contextualize the development of the modern newspaper in Japan. As Japan came to be aware of its weak position in the world, the Meiji government embraced Western technology in an attempt to compete with the powerful Western countries. Social theories and other ideas brought along with these imports changed the idea of the Japanese nation and how the Japanese viewed themselves and their institutions.

The third section will analyze two works, *Takahashi Oden* and *Kokoro*, in light of the previous theoretical and historical discussions. This section will show how the social climate and historical position of Japan at the time is reflected in the works and to illustrate how the works subscribed to a Meiji goal, the unification of Japan. Society in the Meiji period underwent a dramatic shift in attitude toward the West and toward itself. Serialized novels reflected changing ideas among the Japanese public about their own identity. Despite the sweeping cultural changes that marked the Meiji period, the idea of a unified Japan remained the same.

The effect of literature on cultural evolution is an important topic in human history, and the influence varies significantly among different written forms. This paper is one example of how a specific form of written communication can shape and be shaped by culture over time. Thus, the paper should represent a contribution to the growing body of knowledge related to cultural evolution and the forces that drive it.



## Chapter 2

### THEORETICAL POSITION

In broad terms, the ultimate purpose of writing is to communicate ideas. Writing originates in the desire to store information in a medium more stable than memory. This information is understandable by anyone with the correct language tools to decode the message. The writer's thoughts and ideas are stored in the written medium. Readers, anyone who reads the writing, then decode the message. This is the essence of communication; information is transmitted from one entity to another.

Writing serves essentially the same function as speaking or any other form of communication. Particulars vary among methods of communication, but the ultimate purpose remains the same.

Communication is a way to present internal thoughts in a form that creates a similar thought in others in order to share ideas. The number of forms this takes is almost limitless and certainly extends to more than what we traditionally think of as communication: speaking, reading, and writing. Gestures, art forms, music, touch, and even smell are used to communicate. Communication is measured against a theoretical ideal of perfect transmission. We call someone who is able to convey a thought to other people accurately, or with the appearance of accuracy, an effective communicator. Yet, the effectiveness of communication is never perfect. We measure communication against an ideal that can never be attained. The ability to completely understand another person's thoughts is always

beyond our grasp. Despite this, we persist in the endeavor of communication, attempting to create an understanding that is as accurate as possible. Communication is expected to be imperfect and our understanding is also imperfect.

Literature is no exception; it is imperfect communication, and when this imperfection is compounded by a separation of both time and culture, the obstacles to understanding are compounded. All individuals will have a distinctly personal understanding of any work, and each of these will be a unique and imperfect understanding. However, communication and understanding do not have to end with the first exchange. Incorporating the understanding of others into your own interpretation refines your understanding of the text. Each point of understanding enhances your interpretation of the text; each point borders the text and provides an outline of meaning. Incorporating historical perspectives can only help to better outline the context of the text. Using these perspectives, we can access new ways of reading the work and gain a new appreciation for the work's historical context and our own perspectives.

This methodology narrows the possibilities, providing a closer understanding of the work. By attempting to access or recreate a historical context we are broadening our thinking and our point of view. This mirrors the original purpose of literature, communication: communication of foreign ideas, of something different.

Perfection is something worth constantly pursuing, but is, of course, unattainable. Even the idea of a perfect context is meaningless. With historical works, an intellectual understanding is not the same as experiencing the work in the original context, but to give up pursuit because perfection is unattainable limits our ability to gain knowledge, no matter how imperfect that knowledge may be. The variety of reactions found among contemporaries of past works is just as varied as contemporary reactions to those same works. There are as many interpretations of a story as there are readers, no matter their proximity in time to the work. When studying a mass-media object like a newspaper, the goal is not an understanding of any one person's ideas about that object, but an understanding of the collective interpretations of large groups of society. The larger the group of people, the more general and indistinct the response will be, the easier it will be to assess the response, and the easier it will be to apply that response to other groups.

### The Mass-media System in Context

In Meiji Japan, newspapers, the public, and the government comprised a system in which each element variously affected each other. Each of these institutions exerted an influence on the others to some degree or another. These groups were, above all, comprised of individuals. The individual parts are difficult to predict because we cannot understand all of the variables that factor into an individual's decision, but the group as a whole is predictable and understandable.

To begin to understand how these groups worked together in this system we must first begin to understand the groups and their motivations. Beginning here allows us to understand why the system fell into place as it did. Fundamentally, the relationship among the groups was defined by their desires. However, we must keep in mind that these institutions are not discrete organizations. They all fall on a continuum. For example, the mass-media is comprised of all the various aspects that have arisen for the distribution of information. A number of institutions fall under this heading, but where do we categorize a government spokesman, for example? This position is half way between the mass-media and government. Like every complex human system, the boundaries and the extremes are indistinct. For the purposes of this paper, the averages are most important because they more accurately reveal the characteristics of the group as a whole and allow more clear conclusions to be drawn.

## The Government

In relation to the mass-media, governments perform a role similar to that of the public. We will delve into details about the public later, but the essential point is that government is both an audience for the mass-media and a shaper of the mass-media through censorship and other controls. However, we will see that government and the people relate to the mass-media in fundamentally different ways. Government's actions arise from the drive for survival. Simply put, government's prime interest

is the continuation of their rule, and this holds true whether the government is a democracy, a dictatorship, or anything in between. In democratic systems, parties replace individuals as the entities seeking to retain power. Government controls the mass-media and provides public services to the people in order to maintain power. This takes various forms, weaker and stronger controls, but government is always involved with its own representation. One of the most fundamental aspects of government, ceremony, is a distillation of the effort to be represented well to others.

The Meiji government consciously attempted to control the public. In 1887, the newly released Press Regulations stated, “The Home Minister may prohibit or suspend the publication of any newspaper that he deems to be disruptive of public peace and order or injurious to public morals.”<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Home Minister could “prohibit its sale or distribution and seize its printed sheets” as well as “seize its plates and printed copies.”<sup>2</sup> The government’s powers were broad reaching and open ended. A mere condemnation by the Home Ministry could completely cease the publication of any book or newspaper. The inclusion of the language, “injurious to public morals” is of particular importance because with this inclusion, government could make conscious decisions about what the public could or could not see. There was nothing to prevent government

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<sup>1</sup> Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Rubin, 16.

from shutting down a newspaper for voicing a dissenting opinion, for example.

Government can exert significant influence on the mass-media through these direct controls, and in Japan, this practice dates as far back as the Edo period.<sup>3</sup> The mass-media is subject to regulation, censorship, and other direct controls, however government has not been in complete control of the mass-media throughout all of Japanese history. In the Edo period, news broadsheets frequently disobeyed government edicts against publishing current events.<sup>4</sup> The power of government was not an absolute force in publishing until World War II.<sup>5</sup> In general, government does not arbitrarily control the mass-media, but it controls the mass-media to a certain end. Government is a consumer of media in order to understand the information that is being disseminated and to understand how to shape that information to its advantage. The purpose of the Press Regulations in Meiji Japan was to shape the dissemination of information to the public.

As stated previously, government consumes the mass-media in order to be informed, just like a member of the public might do. Government does not inherently know all; part of government's understanding of its own people is shaped by the way the people represent themselves directly and the way they are represented in the mass-media. When consuming media, the government seeks information, keeping an eye on the way both

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<sup>3</sup> Rubin, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Rubin, 17.

<sup>5</sup> Rubin, 27.

it and the people are being represented and keeps in mind censorship powers and how to use them.

## The Public

The public is the most disorganized and indefinite group among the institutions here, but that is a defining characteristic that plays a large role in the interaction between the other groups and the public itself. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* Habermas defines the public, saying “The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public share regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor.”<sup>6</sup> Though Habermas wrote about Europe, the same definition is applicable to Meiji Japan. The public at this time began to involve themselves in the newly created Meiji government. They started to involve themselves in the newly elected bodies.

The public is disorganized and lacks a strong central message, so it has only indirect influence on the other institutions. Public opinion is generally a weak but steady force putting constant pressure in one direction or another. Public opinion is difficult to define exactly for everyone. There will always be people who agree and those who disagree

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<sup>6</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: an inquiry into a category of Bourgeois society* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), 27.

with any situation. More importantly, there will always be a vocal section of the public that drives the perception of public opinion if not public opinion itself. After all, public opinion is merely an understanding of what the public as a whole most strongly feels in one direction or another. The more passive, steady force of public opinion can erupt into more active forms: protest, rebellion, and revolution among others. But usually the force of public opinion is hidden beneath the surface. All of the institutions influence the others to further their own ends. The nature of control between various groups is indistinct, essentially “soft power”. The whole system is both complex and in constant flux because influence and control are so tenuous.

The people’s influence on the mass-media is similar to the government’s influence. As a group, the people both consume and exert an influencing force on the mass-media. The fundamental difference between the people and government is that the public is not consciously looking to shape the nature of the government using the mass-media as a tool, while the government is overtly attempting to shape the nature of the public by using the mass-media. Other than that, the two institutions interact with the mass-media in much the same way. The public has tools of censorship similar to government: purchasing power and idealism. The public’s tools can be just as swift and effective as the most stringent government censorship. The difference lies in the fact that getting a consensus within the government is easier than getting a consensus among the public. A



boycott has the ability to shut down a paper or other commercial enterprise, just as a government order can have the same effect. Another method by which the public can influence the mass-media lies in the power of individuals with ideals or visions to work themselves into positions of power within the commercial framework of a media company. These individuals can then shape the path the mass-media chooses to take. Admittedly, this is a slow process, but it is a process that happens frequently. Financially successful idealists have taken ownership and control of media companies in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

People and media are reciprocally influential, and it is difficult to say with certainty which direction influence travels in any particular circumstance. The indistinct nature of the relationship is compounded by the fact that the two institutions are part of a larger system in a particular historical context. In a historical setting, the mass-media is the main source of information about the public, and therefore our understanding of the public is primarily formed through the very sources we are trying to disentangle from the public. Other sources of information such as diaries, journals, other firsthand accounts, and books were only produced by a limited number of people, certainly not a representative section of the public. The majority of our information either comes from the mass-media or from these individuals who independently produce content. The mood of the public as a whole is not represented without filtering and

interpretation through these various sources. However, the task of representing the people's opinion is not hopeless, as demonstrated by the efforts of historians and anthropologists.

### The Mass-media

The mass-media caters to and shapes the tastes of the public as well as represents the government to the people and the people to themselves and to the government. The press is interested in profit more than anything. Habermas, speaking of European development in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, explains the shift to capitalism and the rise of news as a commodity, "on the one hand this capitalism stabilized the power structure of a society organized in estates, and on the other hand it unleashed the very elements within which this power structure would one day dissolve. We are speaking of the elements of the new commercial relationships: the *traffic in commodities and news* created by early capitalist long-distance trade."<sup>7</sup> Media is a commerce driven system and, "news itself became a commodity."<sup>8</sup> The drive to produce and distribute content originates with the anticipation of profit. There are no higher values than profit because profit means survival for a business and the mass-media is first and foremost a business. Other values are extraneous.

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<sup>7</sup> Habermas, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Habermas, 21.

Furthermore, as long as there are separate entities in the mass-media system, the mass-media is a fractured institution, and the different parts of the mass-media can be antagonistic toward each other. Differing opinions will arise naturally when there is a gap in the market, an opportunity to make money. There is not always a unified voice from the mass-media, and to look at the institution as a homogenous unit is to simplify its nature excessively. This lack of unification inherently limits the power of the mass-media, because the mass-media's power and influence stems from its ability to present information. Information can be easily slanted while maintaining an air of integrity; people are susceptible to minor variations in the presentation of the same information. This power is unstable and based on a relationship of trust between the people the mass-media. The presence of conflicting messages from media organizations immediately undermines the integrity of the information, making the mass-media seem less reliable.

Despite the presence of ideology in the mass-media, the mass-media is commercially driven. A conflict between capitalist ideals and other ideologies arises. The mass-media must sustain itself. There is a clear market for spreading information, but as non-capitalist ideals intrude into the mass-media, the content becomes more and more skewed. As a result, the mass-media system becomes more and more vulnerable to capitalist minded organizations. There is a balance between content and ideals that determine the extent news information can be slanted. An

organization must preserve enough of its integrity and relationship with the public to maintain an income. This must be balanced against the ideals that the organization espouses.

The two ideas of capitalism and idealism exist within the same framework. They are not strictly incompatible ideas because capitalism is also an ideal. However, we more commonly consider these concepts as opposites because the ideal of capitalism is often seen as contrary to other ideals. In fact, Japanese newspapers shifted between ideologies over time. In *Japan's Modern Myths* Carol Gluck points out that in Meiji “newspapers undertook the transition from party organs to commercial enterprises seeking the widest possible readership.”<sup>9</sup> Yet, “repeated assertions of impartiality kept neither the government nor the newspapers free from political alignments.”<sup>10</sup> This struggle merely highlights the nature of the mass-media as an individual-driven system. An individual in a position of power has the ability to direct and guide the message of only a section of the mass-media. A fundamental difference between the mass-media and both government and the public is that the mass-media is shielded from scrutiny and backlash because the individuals in control are neither the deliverer of the message nor the point of contact for reaction to the message. The people in power in the mass-media are generally not public figures, and so they are protected by anonymity in a way that the heads of governments or leaders of public groups are not.

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<sup>9</sup> Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: ideology in the late Meiji period* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), 59.

<sup>10</sup> Gluck, 59.

## Society and Culture

Society and culture are closely and intimately related. One does not exist without the other. Habermas describes a process of culture and society: “culture became a commodity and thus finally evolved into ‘culture’ in the specific sense (as something that pretended to exist merely for its own sake), it was claimed as the ready topic of discussion through which an audience-oriented (*publikumsbezogen*) subjectivity communicated with itself.”<sup>11</sup> Again, the European example fits the Japanese situation. In Japan, general society became aware of its own cultural production early in the Edo period. Society was self-aware, but they were inhibited by the lack of a real mass-media until the Meiji period.

Society is defined by cultural rules. These rules are guidelines and norms that the people who reside in a society generally follow. Language, art, music, and writing are all cultural products, and society and culture can be thought of as a single unit because the society both creates and consumes these products and these products are a reflection of the society. Differences among societies and cultures are a result of the unique history of that culture. There is an intricate interaction between the present and the past that creates the future. Literature, media, and newspapers are cultural products. Not all societies and cultures produce these products; the mass-media arises from historical factors that shape society, such as the drive of society to know itself, the acceptance by society of the

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<sup>11</sup> Habermas, 29

authority of the paper, and a monetization of all of this. Each of these factors is essential to the creation of a media and of newspapers.

The historical position of a society is pivotal because there are physical limitations to printing newspapers in addition to social ones. Namely, sufficient technology must exist to offset the cost of the endeavor, meaning that economics play a central role. News media, at the most basic level, consists of relaying information via word of mouth. However, the limitations of word of mouth are easy to identify. The system can only be sustained on a small scale, and it is subject to a whole host of interference and inaccuracies. Commercializing the system also presents a serious hurdle. Far too many people would have to be employed to reach the far corners of society. Furthermore, people are more likely to have the attitude that this is gossip, something they could have gotten for free anyway. Economic challenges are the primary challenges to the development of a media.

### The Development of Publishing

The newspaper as a subset of media has a particular set of restrictions and customs associated with it. Newspapers evolved from the writing process, but newspapers are a particular subset of the written word. What are the defining characteristics of the newspaper? At the core, newspapers contain articles based on fact, are distributed on a large scale and on a regular basis for people to consume on an individual level. As a result, there are a number of things that must be in place for the

newspaper to emerge as a form of media. Huffman writes in *Politics of the Meiji Press*, “news cannot be disseminated without adequate printing equipment and effective transportation methods.”<sup>12</sup>

The development of writing within a culture, be it a self-invention or otherwise, does not itself create an environment conducive to a public media. Commercialization benefits from a physical object that can be traded and sold, and writing creates a physical copy in a way that speech does not; people are more willing to pay for a tangible object. However, this alone is not enough to spur the development of newspapers. In scribal cultures, there are limited circulations of any given text, but it is unthinkable to expend the manpower to create thousands of copies for people to purchase and then discard. Scribal culture relegates itself to texts with a long circulation life or to texts of personal communication over long distances. Writing is a laborious process, so for everything else there is word of mouth.

Dependence on scribal practices makes it nearly impossible for a newspaper to exist. The time and manpower associated with copying pages of material for mass distribution is not feasible in most economic systems. Commercial success is a major requirement for the formation of the mass-media, and it is cost prohibitive to hand copy newspapers. The time necessary to copy each page is prohibitively long. To copy a large number

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<sup>12</sup> James L. Huffman, *Creating a Public: people and press in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1980), 20.

of pages in a short amount of time, what must be done is to hire many people to copy pages all at once.

What makes this cost prohibitive? One of the defining characteristics of a newspaper is regular publication, and regular publication requires both content and publishing infrastructure. The physical process of publication, in this case scribal copying, adds such a large burden of time and manpower that the whole endeavor becomes unprofitable. The content that might be produced has no avenue to be distributed in a timely manner and so any content that is generated is shunted to other forms, like word of mouth. It is physically too inefficient to carry out large scale scribal copying. Cultural practices have as much to do with this as anything else. The available alternatives and the speed of transmission of a particular language define this cost. Cultural practices and technologies affect this speed greatly. There is a huge difference, for example, in writing block Chinese characters with a brush and ink on thin rice paper and writing cursive English with a ball-point pen on modern paper. Slower transmission speeds increase the cost and create an economic barrier to profitable newspaper writing.

In the technological history of the written word, block-printing is a step up from handwriting. Block-printing has several advantages over scribal copying, namely speed and accuracy. The speed of block-printing is particularly advantageous for newspapers. The expense for each copy you make is much less than copying by hand, and the cost per copy decreases



as more copies are made. Even with these advantages, the newspaper was not successful using block-printing in Japan. The upfront cost of making the master blocks to print from was a larger expense than copying out a limited number by hand, and that cost can never be recouped. This means that in block-printing, the publisher needs to be assured there is enough of a market to justify the initial investment, and the initial investment is not significantly decreased from scribal culture. Block-printing is not a system that is forgiving of high risk endeavors like newspapers, nor is block-printing suited to regular newspaper production because the risky initial cost recurs with every new issue. Additionally, with block-printing, the initial time investment is much higher than hand copying. The tracing and carving of the blocks is a more labor intensive job than copying out a single page, but, after this initial time and cost investment, the printing process is greatly accelerated. The economics work out to the advantage of mass production, but not consistent production.

Movable type presents another huge technological leap over block-printing, and again, it offers some clear economic benefits over block-printing. The largest cost of movable type printing is the initial cost of a set of movable type, but this is a onetime expense. With handwriting, the cost is the same for every page you copy; with block-printing, there is a higher initial cost for each page but successive copies are much cheaper; and with movable type, there is a low cost for everything after the initial setup; each page is much less and the cost of successive copies is less as well. With

movable type, all of the risk is in the upfront cost, but movable type can be used for publishing anything written. It is not limited to just newspapers or just books. A company with a set of movable type can branch out into other forms of publishing with little cost or risk. Movable type fosters an environment of higher risk innovation and invention because the subsequent costs and risks are so low. With movable type the cost of regular newspaper production is minimized. Time is required to initially make a set of type, but creating a page and reproducing that page takes a fraction of the time of either scribal copying or block carving.

### Physical Presence of Newspapers

In terms of a physical presence, newspapers have evolved into unique cultural objects. The most prominent features of a newspaper are a larger than normal sheet size, a large title on the first page along with the most important article, and headlines. This particular format is driven by the cultural position of the newspaper. The newspaper, as stated earlier, is a commercial object, and as a commercial object the newspaper is interested in profit. A large title on the first pages quickly and easily identifies the paper, providing brand recognition. The use of headlines and a front page story are intended to quickly grab the reader's attention, thus enhancing the appeal of the product. The large page size allows the newspaper to use more flexible formatting than a book. Modern newspapers are characterized by multiple articles and advertisements interspersed on a single page.

The physical nature of literature is a defining component. Format is defined by the cultural associations and practices surrounding the production and the reading of literature. Each stage of the process; writing, publishing, and reading has evolved over time to accommodate the physical and human necessities of the reading and writing processes. Reading and writing are not something that humans do naturally. Brushes, pens, pencils, papers, printing devices; all these things are designed to facilitate and supplement our abilities to read and write. The practices of writing and reading have changed over the years and continue to develop just as the languages they use do. We do not read and write in the same manner as people did one hundred years ago. Technology plays a part, but culture also has a role. Regardless of how people read and write at any given time, the simple fact remains; reading and writing are physical processes, and the processes cannot be separated from our understanding of newspapers.

Newspapers are local productions, limited by local and national boundaries. Benedict Anderson, in *Imagined Communities*, points out how, as writers began to use vernacular languages in their works, “the fall of Latin exemplified a larger process in which the sacred communities integrated by old sacred languages were gradually fragmented, pluralized, and territorialized.”<sup>13</sup> Language is tied to national identity and group identification. Publications, to resonate with the people of a particular

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<sup>13</sup> Benedict R. O’G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 19.

area, must be seen as part of the group to be accepted. The reverse of this is also true; the people of a place hold on to their language and demand its superiority in their domain. Newspapers are intrinsically linked with language and culture within national boundaries.

### Newspapers in Society

There are a number of forms of newspaper publication, but the most prominent in the modern world is the daily paper. This frequency balances the economic drain of production and the limited interest of the public. The newspaper is designed to get information distributed as quickly as possible, but like reading and writing, the physical nature of the publishing process makes it prohibitive to continue pushing for faster and faster turnaround on news events past a point. At some point the public will no longer support the cost required to produce content more quickly because the information will not be significant enough. The daily paper is the medium that has arisen as the balance between the two forces. But this is also the cause of the abbreviated production process of newspapers as compared to books. The writing process, the editing process, and the reading process are all shorter in newspapers because readers demand a quick turnaround.

The newspaper is a temporary object and the processes of its creation are abbreviated compared to a book. The book is labored over by the author, with continual revisions and edits. Publishers then edit the book and send it back to the author, and this cycle repeats several times,

sending the book through a long term cycle of revision that is not matched in newspapers. The content of a newspaper comes in and goes out as fast as possible in the allotted timeframe. The entire goal of a newspaper is to reduce turnaround time. The idea behind this is that the faster events can be published, the more relevant they are and the more people will take interest. Newspapers operate on the assumption that people want to know what is going on right now. This is the primary function of a newspaper, but as a whole, books are not concerned with speed. One might argue the opposite is true, that books should have a timeless appeal, so a quick release is of negligible importance. Generally, a book does not rely on up to the minute events to define its meaning.

The other implication to this process is that newspapers only remain relevant for a short time. Newspapers are beholden to current events to supply content and therefore context and meaning to that content. Newspaper articles are relevant to a specific timeframe because they are wholly based on events in the world. News that is received outside the original temporal context is irrelevant to the average reader. As events happen and as the newspaper publishes those events, older events and articles are pushed further from relevance. A book on the other hand has a much slower decline than a newspaper. A book can fall out of style, and more than a few have, but books have the ability to be timeless, where newspapers are too closely linked with a time and a place to do so. *Genji monogatari* is a good example of this. Written over a thousand years ago,

the book is still relevant and read for pleasure. There are no newspaper articles that can match this kind of longevity. The passage of time is inevitable and makes the views in all books and newspapers seem outdated eventually, but the timeframe is vastly different for the two media.

Additionally, our cultural reading practices shape the physical format of the book, the newspaper, and the differences between the two. Newsprint is a different physical material compared to some of the archival quality papers that books use, and even low quality books are usually made of better paper than newsprint. Even the shape of a newspaper is far different than that of the book. Newspapers are often called broadsheets because of the distinctive sheet size, while books are generally much smaller. The large sheet size helps fit multiple articles and advertisements on a single page. The other major physical difference between a book and a newspaper is the lack of a cover on the newspaper. Both the cover of a book and the front page of a newspaper are designed to attract a reader's attention, but a newspaper must also contend with a premium on space. A book has as many pages as it needs, but a newspaper strives to be as compact as possible. Headlines have developed around this point, to briefly describe the content of an article. Newspapers strive to make information as open and accessible as possible to quickly grab the reader's attention.

The newspaper reinvents itself each day; the stories change and the headlines are different. In short, from a content perspective, there is little that remains from day to day, other than the title of the newspaper. It may seem obvious, but this means that the newspaper is constantly changing, not just the content, but how that content is created and presented. The newspaper, the authors, editors, entire staff, and the direction of the paper can change dramatically over time. A newspaper must constantly change with the times. Its livelihood is based on the fact that it continually has new content.

One unique format used by some newspapers is the serialized novel. A newspaper publishes parts of a continuing story in either daily or weekly installments. Serialized novels represent a form of literature that is part way between a newspaper article and a book. Historically, newspaper publishers used serialized novels to attract and retain subscribers. As scholars looking back on history, using media, particularly serialized novels, can help us to understand the cultural environments of the past. Serialized novels form a special relationship between authors and readers, offering us a unique perspective on culture. Studying culture entails identifying the general public's opinion and how various segments of and institutions in society interact with that opinion and with each other. Serialized novels offer unparalleled insights into these interactions because they must, by necessity, follow the arc of cultural change. Serialized novels have to follow culture closely because their ultimate

success is measured only by how many people they can attract as readers, which is determined by their appeal to people's sensibilities. In order to sell, the serialized novel must appeal to as broad an audience as possible.

Mainstream serialized novels are not often ahead of or behind their time because a serialized novel out of step with readers would be unsuccessful and the author would be out of a job. Though a successful serialized novel cannot buck the norm and remain successful, there is some leeway in what constitutes the cultural norm. Each newspaper has a distinctive readership that represents only a segment of the current population, and this adds another level of complexity to the study of culture through serialized novels. Generally, the smaller a paper, the more selective the audience and the more the paper can be out of step with mainstream society and remain in step with its readers. Circulation size is a vital indicator of the weight we, as cultural scholars, should place on a publication relative to others when drawing conclusions about general cultural trends. Larger papers can be expected to be more closely tied with the will of the general populous and mainstream culture.

Large newspapers follow, lead, and parallel the general mood of the people, sometimes reacting to the public; sometimes causing a reaction from the public. Newspapers are intrinsically linked with society once they become established. They become household names and are expected to remain responsive to society's interests and needs. A fundamental part of the business of newspapers is attracting subscribers to widen their profits.



Attracting subscribers means expanding the readership base, and this means appealing to potential customers, not challenging them. Yet, just as individuals have varied opinions and outlooks, newspapers have unique and contradictory biases and opinions. The mass-media, like any other institution, is not homogeneous.

### Characteristics of Serialized Novels

The dichotomy I have set up here is something of a misnomer. Books and newspapers are not completely separate literary genres. They are different forms of the same thing; consumer oriented writing. They are written works intended for sale that share an eye toward the mass consumer market. The biggest thing that separates them is the timeframe and context. Newspapers operate on an abbreviated timeframe as explained previously, and the context differs between the two because newspapers are defined by events in the world and books are not. Books can be on nearly any subject, current or not. Books based around current events, they become subject to some of the same time pressures as newspapers. However, the two are merely parts of a spectrum, and there are number of forms that fall in between.

The serialized novel falls on the continuum between a newspaper and a book, combining elements of both. Many of the physical traits of serialized novels are taken from newspapers and these traits reflect on some of the plot and writing choices. Like newspapers, serialized novels come in short segments that are different for every publication. Yet,

serialized novels most resemble books when they are taken out of the context of the newspaper and bound into book format. Serialized novels share characteristics of both the newspaper and book forms, but remain separate from both; they are unique reading experiences in themselves and this experience cannot be equated to that of either books or newspapers.

The comparison of these forms serves not only to show the difference between them, but to draw attention to the continuum that comprises printed media. The differences are not fundamental to the nature of the forms, but stem from a series of cultural choices made in the exchange between readers, writers, and publishers. The distinctive, recognizable newspaper as we think of it in the modern world is a product of many years of development and change. Newspapers will continue to change as time and culture shape them.

As newspapers evolved as a cultural phenomenon, the serialized novel arose as a popular form. Habermas traces a progression of steps, stating that “journals were complimented by periodicals containing not primarily information but pedagogical instructions and even criticism and reviews”, which shifted into “scholarly periodicals speaking to the circle of educated laymen”, and “in the guise of the so-called learned article, critical reasoning made its way into the daily press;” and finally newspapers “published learned articles, book reviews, and occasionally ‘a historical

report sketched by a professor and relevant to current events.”<sup>14</sup> The specifics do not apply to the Japanese context, but the general flow does, Habermas describes a transition from elite, scholarly articles to more popular articles. For serialized novels, newspapers are a significant part of the interaction between the author and readers. Newspapers are a highly intrusive middle man in the publishing process. The newspaper defines the physical format of the serialized novel.

Serialized novels have a number of similarities to the news articles that they appear next to. The same editors control the content of both, and the same pressures are exerted on both. The distinguishing line between the two is indistinct. Like news articles, serialized novels create new content for every issue and adjust to and change for the events and attitudes of the times. The public, from which readers are drawn, demands relevant news from the newspapers, and newspapers pressure serializations to conform to, or at least not run counter to, the mood of the time.

One characteristic trait of serialized novels is short individual sections or episodes to fit the allotted space in the newspaper. Authors must balance each episode to ensure the proper length of each episode and a meaningful advancement in the story. The author must keep the reader satisfied enough to continue reading the next installment. Authors must build up enough anticipation, excitement, or suspense to compel readers

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Habermas, 24-25.

to continue reading but leave enough of the story out to continue to write for an extended period of time; in some cases indefinitely. The reader is limited by the newspaper format as is the author. Because of the cultural practices surrounding newspapers, newspapers are temporary, disposable objects. Therefore, the reader can expect to have only one small part of the story at a time. The whole story is rarely brought together. Furthermore, readers have no liberty to finish the story at will or read more at their leisure. They have to stop reading at the end of that day's installment and wait for the next installment to come out. The reader is at the mercy of the author and the newspaper; a serialized novel is not a self-contained unit like a traditional book.

### Serializations and Authors

Serialization provided major support for the writer and the writer's craft in Meiji Japan. In *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination* Zwicker translates a passage by the writer Ozaki Kōyō stating that, because of Japan's limited market size, Japanese writers have a much tougher time making money, "but when you are always pressed upon to simply earn a living like Japanese writers, and must write endlessly, one simply doesn't have the room to produce a first-rate novel."<sup>15</sup> But the most famous and popular authors were rewarded and heavily advertised by the

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<sup>15</sup> Jonathan E. Zwicker, *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination: melodrama, the novel, and the social imaginary in nineteenth-century Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 175.

newspapers.<sup>16</sup> Famous authors had influence because their material was proven to be popular so newspapers and publishers could be sure that there would be at least a moderate response to stories by famous authors. The newspapers could guarantee an income by using well know names. Newspapers were ruled by economics. Newspapers are wary of taking risks, and by commissioning works from famous authors, they could ensure a return on their initial investment in the author. The system rewarded authors for their ability to attract readers and increase subscriptions.

The author and the newspaper want to retain readers. However, there are constraints put on the author by the newspaper in its capacity as publisher. Newspapers limit the author's range of expression and content through mandated or voluntary censorship. This occurs because of government laws and regulations as well as the newspaper's own goals or ideals. Newspaper's goals and ideals play a part because there is inherent bias in every method of communication, and newspapers are no exception. Newspapers slant reporting on information to encourage a particular reaction from readers. Newspapers cultivate a readership; a particular subset of society that agrees with the outlook of the newspaper and finds it worthy of their subscription. This group of people both defines and is defined by the content that will be sought by the newspaper and, consequently, which authors they approach and what kind of stories they

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Zwicker, 169.

request from those authors. When newspapers have the option of commissioning an author to write serializations, the newspaper can selectively choose an author with a story or an outlook that matches the newspaper's own.

The serialized novel system is set up such that the author is placed under demanding constraints. In particular, the flow of a serialized novel is highly influenced by formatting constraints from newspapers. The author is working for the newspaper and must further the goal of attracting and keeping readers. To the newspaper, the author is merely an attempt to solicit more readers and keep them reading and buying the newspaper. Again, this is a system in which economics is king. The newspaper is only interested in its own well-being; namely profitability. The serialized novel is a form that the newspaper, benefits from a personal relations between readers and authors.

### Serializations and Readers

The cycle of communication for newspaper serialized novels is unique to this medium. The reader and writer are engaged in a conversation in a way that is quite different from traditional books and publishing. The reader has far more involvement in the writing process than in traditional book publishing. Readers often engage with a story that has yet to be completed. Readers have the ability to express themselves to the author before the story has been completely finished. "The mechanism of serialization invites just that intervention: first, serialization itself seems

to deny the imagining of the novel as a fixed, organic, and inevitable; and in turn, the newspaper soliciting letters to the editor encourages readers to become writers.”<sup>17</sup> This is unlike a traditional book that is completed by the time a reader has the opportunity to engage with the text. Editors and publishers traditionally provide feedback to the author before the work is complete, yet readers have the ability to join this process only with serialized novels.

A serialized novel presents many benefits for all parties. Readers have a larger stake in the process and can be more involved because they can comment on the story before it has been fully fleshed out. In *Practices of the Sentimental Imagination* Zwicker writes, “The novel is *the* great cultural product of print. The novel provides to a reading public—‘unreliant on proximity’—a set of common themes and values that allow a set of imaginary relationships to develop among readers who have never met.”<sup>18</sup> Newspapers take advantage of the sense of community building and identification to hold readers together under a common banner. And authors can take advantage of this also, with an additional source of feedback to continually hone their story in the process of publishing it. And the episodic nature of the newspaper system works in the favor of publishers because they can drop a story that is unsuccessful without incurring the same loss a full publishing run of a book might incur. As a whole, the system for serialized novels is more flexible and reactive than

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<sup>17</sup> Zwicker, 172.

<sup>18</sup> Zwicker, 57.

traditional novel writing. Readers have an enormous amount of control to influence serialized novels.

The strong author-reader relationship with serialized novels in some ways cuts out the importance of the publisher. The reader and the author do have a strong relationship but, with or without their conscious knowledge, the publisher can shape the nature of that relationship at a basic level. Newspapers control the most fundamental layer of interaction between the author and readers: they publish the author's works. From this initial point of contact provided by the newspaper, the reader responds to the author, and a relationship develops. But newspapers continue to provide support to both authors and readers by continuing to publish the author, accepting readers' feedback, and facilitating communication between the two. The newspaper is not strictly necessary in this system, but it facilitates contact between the two groups and makes it easier for both parties to participate in the process. In an ideal system there might not be a need for a publisher between the two groups, but in practice the publisher is a beneficial part of the system.

### Serializations and the Mass-media System

Looking at the system as a whole, readers and authors, newspapers, and government all have a stake and a say in the content and style of serialized novels. These groups seek to push or pull newspapers in one direction or another. No group takes a passive role in this struggle. But newspapers themselves have control of a number of factors in both the



short and long terms. On a daily basis, newspapers are the arbiters of content. They decide when and how content is published. The other groups can exert pressures on the newspaper, but often the pressure is in reaction to what the newspaper has already published, giving the newspaper the first word. Newspapers also have the final say in what they publish; only the most extreme situations stop a newspaper from publishing something.

The interaction between these complex groups forms a system that is difficult to grasp or predict on an individual level. The nature of the influence between the groups is something that can only be approached in general terms because the groups are so interconnected that their influence on each other is difficult to distinguish. It is impossible to tell if the mass-media shifted the public view, or the public shifted the mass-media's view. The only thing that can be said with certainty is in both cases, we are looking at fractured groups working without clear intentions. The same is true of newspapers. The mass-media is comprised of mainstream newspapers, local newspapers, and a number of other forms of media, and they all have different ideas about the world and how to represent it. However, when studying these fractured groups, the best course of action is to use an individual in the center of the group to represent the majority opinion, and this is the position this paper will take.

## Chapter 3

### HISTORY OF NEWSPAPERS IN JAPAN

The development and spread of the newspaper takes a number of forms. Japan, in particular, was a relative latecomer to the newspaper. The newspaper was an adaptation from European colonizers around the Meiji period. When discussing Japanese newspapers, there are some key points that are helpful to keep in mind. The development of media in Japan was not a linear process. For example, Japan experimented with movable type in the 1590s, but abandoned the project because of the impracticality of having to create tens of thousands of Chinese characters.<sup>19</sup> Technologically speaking, the process moved along in fits and starts.

The modern newspaper in Japan was not a native invention. The Meiji Restoration did not bring about a sudden thirst for news by the population and subsequently newspapers. The idea was imported along with other foreign ideas and with the foreigners themselves when they moved into some of the newly opened Japanese trade ports. Many foreigners came from countries with healthy newspaper industries and were used to having a daily paper. The first papers printed in Japan were reprints of foreign papers. The practice of importing newspapers from European countries has a long history in Japan. Throughout the Edo period, the Dutch circulated newspapers to their outpost in Nagasaki, and the Japanese were able to acquire these papers. The shogunate collected

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<sup>19</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 20.

and translated Dutch papers and had the Dutch prepare regular reports on European affairs.<sup>20</sup> The general population never saw these papers, and the idea of the newspaper did not take hold in early Japanese society. However, after the Meiji Restoration, with the arrival of a number of foreigners from different countries into the trade ports, foreign newspapers grew in number, and native newspapers soon followed.

### *Yomiuri and Kawaraban*

In the Edo period, there were publications that “began publishing news intentionally as a means of making profit or spreading information.”<sup>21</sup> These publications were called *yomiuri* and *kawaraban*. Though these were similar to newspapers, they are usually and more accurately called news broadsheets because they were often single page publications.

*Yomiuri*, *yomi* ‘reading’ and *uri* ‘selling’ are, as the name suggests, sheets of paper printed out and hawked on the street by salesmen.<sup>22</sup> *Kawaraban* are also as they sound, *kawara* ‘tile’ and *ban* ‘publishing.’ *Kawaraban* were block-printed news sheets issued on a one time basis about a significant or unusual event. “When time was of the essence, printers were known to resort to wax plates or even slabs of *mochi* (pounded rice cakes).”<sup>23</sup> These provided an adequate enough printing

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<sup>20</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 15-16.

<sup>21</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 21.

<sup>22</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 21.

block that was much faster to produce than carving one out of wood. Obviously, wood has many advantages, but the interests of speed trumped all in these cases. *Kawaraban* were full of “news of fires and assassinations, sightings of ghosts, double love suicides, pictures of festivals and sporting events, stories about the birth of triplets, tales of volcanic eruptions and mermaid spottings.”<sup>24</sup> In *Creating a Public*, Huffman breaks down these early news sources into three categories: “picture broadsides, composed mostly of flood, fire, and earthquake sketches; musical *yomiuri*, in which hawkers attracted potential buyers by singing about sexual escapades and double suicides; and miscellaneous sheets devoted to reports of vendettas and even official acts.”<sup>25</sup>

In comparison to *Yomiuri*, *Kawaraban* seem to have had the hallmarks of a modern newspaper. *Kawaraban* were sold for profit directly to individuals to be read. However, what separates *kawaraban* from newspapers is *kawaraban* were not issued with any regularity. They were printed by publishers who thought they could capitalize on a current event, but successive issues did not follow the initial publication. There was little to distinguish one publication from another. No publisher specialized in *kawaraban*, and there was no consistency among publications. At least three thousand separate *kawaraban* were published over the course of the Edo period.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 22.

<sup>26</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 22.

*Yomiuri* and *kawaraban* are close approximations to what we think of as modern newspapers. Their main shortcoming was consistency. A modern newspaper survives by means of a stable base of subscribers. A newspaper is a product; it is reliant on a regular consumer base. Newspapers cultivate a relationship with readers to encourage them to continue to read and buy the newspaper. *Yomiuri* and *kawaraban* do not maintain any kind of connection with readers; they are issued on an individual basis. The temporary nature and inconsistency that were hallmarks of these forms did not prepare the Japanese readership for the modern newspaper because these forms maintained no consistency or sense of connection or loyalty with readers.

A major factor for the development of these particular forms of media was the Tokugawa government's strict censorship policies and what Huffman calls "the highly entrepreneurial instincts of Tokugawa townspeople."<sup>27</sup> There was a ban on publishing anything based on current events. Kabuki, puppet theater, and books tried to circumvent this rule by setting the prohibited current events in the past.<sup>28</sup> Performance traditions started the practice of casting current events as historical fiction to avoid censorship, but *yomiuri* and *kawaraban* could publish relatively uncensored material because they were much less accountable than plays. These publications managed to circumvent the rule by publishing extremely rapidly and stopping just as quickly. The temporary nature of

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<sup>27</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 23.

the forms allowed the publishers to protect themselves from some actions by the authorities. In the three hundred years of stable town society in the Edo period, Japan developed a number of non-newspaper alternatives that were defined by the commercial, political, and societal constraints of the times.

### Early Meiji Papers

In the later years of Edo and the opening of Japan, Japanese traveling abroad saw newspapers in Western countries and immediately recognized the potential political and social advantages they could bring to Japan.<sup>29</sup> The Shogunate began to produce and internally circulate translations first of foreign news stories and then entire newspapers.<sup>30</sup> These first newspapers were not for public consumption but were for internal government use. Foreigners brought newspapers with them to Japan, and the Japanese eventually took up newspaper production themselves after being convinced of their usefulness to the government. It is significant to note that newspapers were first adopted because of their usefulness to the government. The adoption of newspapers was slow at first, but eventually newspapers gained popularity with the government and then the public.

The first papers in Japan were owned and operated by foreigners in the new port cities. Some of the papers include: the *Nagasaki Shipping*

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<sup>29</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 25-26.

<sup>30</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 26.

*List and Advertiser* in 1861, the *Japan Express* in 1862, *The Japan Commercial News* in 1863, the *Japan Times*, and the *Japan Gazette* that Huffman calls the “closest approach yet to a full-fledged newspaper.”<sup>31</sup> Foreigners living in the port cities saw the dearth of newspapers as an opportunity for profit. Even before the Meiji period began, the foreign language press was a part of the Japanese economy.<sup>32</sup>

Native Japanese papers began to appear soon after the introduction of the foreign papers. In 1864, the first Japanese language newspaper, *Shimbunshi*, was published. This paper only lasted twenty-four issues, “but it was the first Japanese-language paper produced by and for private individuals on a continuing basis.”<sup>33</sup> When the newspaper was introduced to the Japanese public as a whole, they had a difficult time accepting the newspaper as an object worthy of purchase. One anecdote tells the story of a newspaper man convincing a merchant to buy a subscription. The merchant wonders why he should buy the newspaper when he already has a copy. After careful explanation the merchant comes to understand that each day brings a new issue and new content.<sup>34</sup> Newspapers were a completely new concept to Japanese townsmen in the Meiji period, but in time newspapers caught on and flourished in Japan.

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<sup>31</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 28-29.

<sup>32</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 28-30.

<sup>33</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 59-60.

## *Yokohama mainichi shimbun*

One of the earliest successful newspapers was the *Yokohama mainichi shimbun* started in February 1871.<sup>35</sup> This paper also claims the title of the first daily Japanese-language paper.<sup>36</sup> While the *Yokohama mainichi* was successful, it was by no means a runaway success. In fact, the Japanese press had not really taken a firm hold in Japanese society.<sup>37</sup> However, there are a number of telling points concerning the success of this paper. That the *Yokohama mainichi* was the first daily Japanese newspaper is important for a number of reasons. First, the daily newspaper had never before been attempted in Japan for consumption by the Japanese public. This indicates a major shift in the interests and tastes of the Japanese. The Japanese were beginning to see the value in the regular supply of information.

Secondly, the *Yokohama mainichi's* success indicates that consumers thought the content of the paper was valuable. The *Yokohama mainichi* was not a trend setter by any means; initially, the paper consisted of the usual international and shipping news with the addition of some important domestic news. The paper successfully marketed itself to the merchants and tradesmen dealing with foreigners and foreign trade in Yokohama, the new major port for foreigners. The paper was oriented toward the business elite, but eventually it had to change to appeal to the

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<sup>35</sup> James L. Huffman, *Politics of the Meiji Press: the life of Fukuichi Gen'ichirō* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 1980), 81.

<sup>36</sup> Huffman, *Politics*, 81.

<sup>37</sup> Huffman, *Politics*, 81.



general public, like other Japanese newspapers. The *Yokohama mainichi* joined the ranks of later, emerging papers. These papers appealed to the masses, and they were criticized as “relics” by the Meiji newsman Fukuchi Gen’ichirō and claimed to be “defaced with such filthy paragraphs as to render them worse than contemptible”<sup>38</sup> by John Black, the editor of the *Japan Herald*, one of the first English papers in Japan. In the early days of the *Yokohama Mainichi*, the publishers succeeded in creating a paper that targeted a specific group, and they were also successful in following the trend of newspapers to keep potential customers interested. The paper never sold in high quantities, but it was a huge success for the Japanese newspaper industry considering the number of other papers that had shut down in the early years of Meiji.<sup>39</sup>

Lastly, the *Yokohama mainichi* made a critical contribution to the development of the newspaper as a whole in Japan. It was an unwitting test bed for both future consumers and future publishers. Consumers became more familiarized with the idea of a daily newspaper, and because people who were purchasing this paper were the rich elite, the newspaper was elevated to a status symbol. In addition to this, Meiji Japan was fascinated with everything Western, and the newspaper was a highly visible Western import. It seems almost inevitable that the newspaper was set for a meteoric rise.

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<sup>38</sup> Huffman, *Politics*, 81.

<sup>39</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 37.

Publishers were able to observe in the *Yokohama mainichi* what it took to create a daily paper. A daily paper must maintain its interest and freshness every day to keep the buying public interested. The *Yokohama mainichi* had to figure out what did and did not attract the Japanese consumer. The rapid publishing cycle of a daily newspaper allows new ideas and innovations to be quickly introduced and refined. Monthly or weekly papers do not have the same quick publishing cycle. Successive papers were indebted to the *Yokohama mainichi* for paving the way with the Japanese public. Later papers had the opportunity to learn from the improvements and changes made by the *Yokohama mainichi*.

#### *Ōshimbun*, *koshimbun*, and Meiji Serialization

As Japan's newspaper industry began to grow, a split emerged. The industry was divided between *ōshimbun* (large papers) and *koshimbun* (small papers). *Ōshimbun* "concentrated on political editorializing and were written in a style too difficult for any but the educated reader."<sup>40</sup> *Koshimbun* "were more commercialized and written" making free use of the simple syllabary... for the least literate class of reader."<sup>41</sup> These terms are used more to describe the nature of the content in the newspaper rather than the actual amount of news in the publication, although the

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<sup>40</sup> Rubin, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Rubin, 37.

origin of the term began because the *koshimbun* were printed on smaller sheets of paper.<sup>42</sup>

A “typical” *ōshimbun* would begin with affairs of “the Council of State or specific government offices”, move on to “editorials on public issues and news reports about governmental affairs”, followed by “politically oriented correspondence and foreign news”, and finally a section for “general-interest news” that was “[a] section that had neither headlines nor typographical divisions, except for an open circle indicating each change in topic.”<sup>43</sup> These *ōshimbun* catered to an elite clientele, one that was interested in high-minded political topics, one coming from a lineage of Confucian elitism.<sup>44</sup> Huffman relates an anecdote by the early editor John Black:

A bemused John Black observed that the singular characteristic of the patrician he had hired to edit his own *Nisshin Shinjishi* was his unwillingness to write prose that ordinary people could understand. Trained in the classical styles of the educated, he sought only to influence his own kind. “Everyone said how beautiful was his language,” Black quipped, “but I had many convincing proofs that it often took some of its professed admirers a long time to understand

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<sup>42</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 93.

<sup>43</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 62-63

<sup>44</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 60-65.

it. It had the effect, however, of placing the paper very high in the estimation of the highest and most cultivated classes.<sup>45</sup>

*Koshimbun* emerged to offset the serious nature of their larger cousins. They catered to the mass market audience by being easier to read, employing the Japanese *hiragana* syllabary. The first successful *koshimbun*, the *Yomiuri shimbun*, began in 1874, and a year later it was the largest selling paper in Tokyo.<sup>46</sup> *Koshimbun* covered the news and events of the day and were quick to publish extras. They appealed to broad segments of society because they were less expensive, more relevant, and easier to read than the *ōshimbun*.<sup>47</sup> The small papers published news more interesting to the average reader, filling in the gaps left by the large papers. It is important to note that the division between the two styles of paper did not last forever. Into the 1880s and up to the 1910s, the mainstream newspapers converged on a middle ground between the high minded *ōshimbun* and the populous *koshimbun*.<sup>48</sup>

This paper is primarily concerned with *koshimbun* in the early part of Meiji because these papers were published for the mass audience. In 1876 the two largest *ōshimbun*, the *Tokyo nichichi shimbun* and the *Yūbin hōchi*, had a circulation of 10,951 and 7,978 respectively.<sup>49</sup> These are

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<sup>45</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 65.

<sup>46</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 89.

<sup>47</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 93-94.

<sup>48</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 94.

<sup>49</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 93.

dwarfed by the two largest *koshimbun* papers, the *Yomiuri shimbun* and the *Tōkyō eiri shimbun*, at 20,822 and 14,381 respectively.<sup>50</sup>

One defining characteristic of *koshimbun*, as explained by Huffman, is that they ran serialized novels.<sup>51</sup> The first serialized novel began in the *Tōkyō eiri shimbun* in 1874.<sup>52</sup> The fervor with which Japan embraced the serialized novel in the Meiji period is reflected in the popularity of the *koshimbun* and the list of famous authors and works that emerged from these serialized novels.

Government policies in Japan made the serialized novel the primary method of publishing stories in Meiji Japan. Rubin explains in *Injurious to Public Morals*, “The police wanted to see no periodicals or books until the publishers had incurred the expense of setting type and running presses.”<sup>53</sup> Should the publishers print something that was later censored, the publisher would then be out the expense of publishing the work. Publishing was a risky business in Japan. Newspapers could take on the risks of publishing novels more than book publishers because the risk was incurred in small increments. One day censored was not something that would break the bank for a newspaper, and if the serialization continued to be censored, the newspaper could always terminate it. Serializations mitigated much of the risk caused by government

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<sup>50</sup> □ Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 93-94.

<sup>51</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 93

<sup>52</sup> Huffman, *Creating a Public*, 428.

<sup>53</sup> Rubin, 16.

regulation, unlike the publishing of a traditional book in which all of the investment is lost if the book is banned.

Serializations in Japan played a huge part in the shaping of the literary scene. The rise of *koshimbun* and serialized novels initially sparked the public's interest, and they became enthralled with newspaper articles and stories describing the events happening in society around them. Scandals reigned supreme in the *koshimbun*: murders, suicides, love affairs, and natural disasters; all were greedily pored over by an enthralled public eager for the next big story. Perhaps the most famous of these stories were stories of “poison-women”, women murderers who sometimes poisoned their victims.<sup>54</sup> These stories captivated the Meiji audience. Torioi Omatsu, Hara Okinu, and Takahashi Oden are perhaps the most famous.

#### *Tokyo nichichi shimbun* and the Satsuma Rebellion

Successive papers, like the *Tokyo nichichi shimbun*, at first catered to an elite clientèle, then to a more broad audience, and were indebted to earlier papers, including the foreign press and the *Yokohama mainichi*. The *Tokyo nichichi* was started soon after the *Yokohama mainichi*, but it eventually spearheaded the next wave of development in Japanese newspapers. This wave transformed Japanese newspapers into works recognizable as modern day newspapers.

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<sup>54</sup>

Rubin, 37-38.

This change began with a man, Fukuchi Gen'ichirō. Fukuchi was hired on as the editor-in-chief of the *Tokyo nichii nichii* in 1874.<sup>55</sup> Fukuchi had traveled overseas on government missions and had already worked at the government's newspaper. Rubin outlines the major changes Fukuchi brought to the *Tokyo nichii nichii*: he unified the business and editorial sides of the paper, instituted a daily editorial column, emphasized reporting by requiring writers to go out to gather news themselves, and created a tight relationship with the government. Fukuchi was a revolutionary in the Japanese newspaper industry. Under his leadership, the *Tokyo nichii nichii* grew to be an immensely profitable and politically powerful newspaper.<sup>56</sup>

In 1877, the Satsuma Rebellion broke out. This was a turning point in the course of Japanese newspapers. Fukuchi took immediate interest in the event as it was developing and he quickly went to Osaka and then on to Kyushu to report on the rebellion first hand. Fukuchi was lucky that the local commander needed someone to draft official documents and prepare reports, and he was able to quickly jump into that role and write newspaper articles in his spare time.<sup>57</sup> The *Tokyo nichii nichii* took off in popularity as people scrambled for information about the rebellion. Rubin describes Fukuchi's articles as “full of poignant detail and crisply written.”<sup>58</sup> The *Tokyo nichii nichii* was the only newspaper with a reporter

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<sup>55</sup> Rubin, 84-95

<sup>56</sup> Rubin, 114-115.

<sup>57</sup> Rubin, 115-117.

<sup>58</sup> Rubin, 117.

at the front for two weeks, and after reporters from other papers arrived, Fukuchi sent down more reporters and maintained a reporting advantage on the front line.<sup>59</sup>

With this event, Japanese newspapers emerged into the realm of the modern newspaper. Journalism and reporting were in demand by the Japanese people so they could follow events happening in their own country. Newspaper publishers' reactions to the Satsuma rebellion marked a monumental shift in Japanese newspaper culture. Up to this point, the prime objective and motivator was profit for the *koshimbun* and prestige for the *ōshimbun*. The *koshimbun* catered to every scandal and piece of gossip that floated by, and the *ōshimbun* tried to hold themselves above the fray; aloof and uninterested.

This idea of the newspaper as a voice describing the events of the nation, both large and small, was a new idea for the Japanese people, and a new idea for Japanese newspapers. The public became more involved with the affairs of the nation as newspapers began to broaden their scope from just gossip or solely high-minded editorials. The Japanese found a mass-media lying between these two extremes.

### Newspapers over Time

Government control was an important factor in the environment of Meiji newspaper publishing. Censors had almost free reign to censor and ban at will. Newspapers had to respond to the real threat of censorship.

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<sup>59</sup> Rubin, 117-118.



Writers and editors had to work around government censorship of realistic fiction, the portrayal of nudes, and social criticism among other issues.<sup>60</sup> Newspapers had to actively choose their message, carefully selecting their content, and editing that content to bring it to the people in a way that was appealing while still eluding government control. One striking counter to the trend of heavy government censorship on social commentaries is the government's relative disinterest in the "poison-women" stories in early Meiji.<sup>61</sup> However, in general, newspapers were heavily censored and we cannot escape this fact. The patterns and rules for censorship were hardly clear to the writers at the time, and attempts to understand the system or press the authorities to codify their judgments fell flat.<sup>62</sup> Through the censorship process, the government exerted a powerful influence on newspapers throughout the Meiji period, and the government's hand grew heavier over time.

Looking back to the early Edo period, Japan has a fairly long history of news media, but not in the modern sense. The early Japanese attempts were just that, attempts. This infant media never took hold in any kind of a systematic or organized way. Edo period *yomiuri* and *kawaraban* were irregular and uncoordinated attempts to make a quick but limited profit off of current events. In the Edo period, Japan had many of the right conditions to establish newspapers; large, stable urban populations, disposable incomes, and a high literacy rate, yet there were a few major

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<sup>60</sup> Rubin, 40-51.

<sup>61</sup> Rubin, 38.

<sup>62</sup> Rubin, 95.

opposing factors that prevented the industry from achieving its full potential. Heavy government censorship, the economic limitations of woodblock-printing, and the wealth of viable alternatives for news distribution all restricted the growth of the newspaper industry.

Newspapers first appeared in the late Edo period and grew slowly in early Meiji. Up to the 1880s it was rare for a paper to exceed 10,000 subscribers.<sup>63</sup> Still, Rubin points out newspapers were always increasing in numbers of subscribers and number of papers distributed. There were 8.3 million papers printed in 1874 and 44.5 million in 1879.<sup>64</sup> And in 1885, the *Asahi shimbun* had over 32,000 subscribers.<sup>65</sup>

What characterized the development of the newspaper in Japan was a continual shift from specialized newspapers to more popular and commercially viable newspapers. The *Asahi* is a perfect example of this change. It was neither an *ōshimbun* nor a *koshimbun*, but it incorporated ideas from both. Much of the paper was dull political news and editorials, but the paper included popular human interest stories on the later pages, serialized novels at the end, and simpler writing with the phonetic *furigana* providing a pronunciation guide throughout.<sup>66</sup> The *Asahi* was the model for the Japanese newspaper moving forward from the 1880s, full of popular appeal and high minded political news.

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<sup>63</sup> Rubin 87.

<sup>64</sup> Rubin, 87.

<sup>65</sup> Rubin, 145.

<sup>66</sup> Rubin, 144-145.

## Serialized Novels and Japanese Naturalism

Serialized novels adapted and changed over time along with the newspapers and their readers. Japan emerged from the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 as a major player on the world stage. The social mood of the time was out of step with the political climate, and tension arose between the public and the government. Japanese newspapers, as the conduit between the two groups, were a battlefield on which the two groups fought.

Naturalism in Japan arose in literature and in serialized novels as the voice for young people who “sought the meaning of life, spouting philosophies of free love and women’s liberation.”<sup>67</sup> Foreign literature in Japan flourished under the influence of Zola and later, authors the likes of: “Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Gogol, Andreiev, Chekhov, Merezhkovski, Kropotkin, Garshin, and Gorki; Balzac, Hysmans, Hugo, France, and Maupassant; Nietzsche, Wagner, Hauptmann, and Sudermann; D’Annuncio and Fogazzaro; Sienkiewicz and Orzeszkowa; Ibsen, Bjørnsen, Kierkegaard, and Strindberg; Symons, Shaw, Pinero, Meredith, Kipling, Whitman, Twain, and Poe.”<sup>68</sup> This huge influx of foreign literature changed the literary scene in Japan.

The development spurred the growth of Japanese naturalism, which was described by Hasegawa Tenkei, chief literary critic for *Taiyō*, and translated by Jay Rubin as:

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<sup>67</sup> Rubin, 59.

<sup>68</sup> Rubin, 60.

Naturalism was the iconoclastic Art for an Age of Disillusionment (*Genmetsu jidai no geijutsu*). The truth sought by the present age is not lofty or abstract, he wrote, but an honest, commonsensical picture of everyday life. The image of woman is no longer framed in stars and flowers; the theory of evolution has shown us that man is an animal and is not fashioned in God's image; we can see now that the upper classes are no different from the rest of us—we all eat, drink, and defecate; the illusions of religion have been destroyed; the sacredness of nature has been reduced to a catalogue of cells, gasses, and elements. Far from being a sad turn of events, however, this advance in human knowledge is cause for celebration. Without the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate, veiled as it was in illusion, and without the Restoration's introduction of the scientific world view, the vast developments of the Meiji period would not have occurred to demonstrate the illusion of Aryan supremacy. Ibsen, he said, is the one who points the way to the future with his art that does more than reproduce surface realism while it remains free of frivolous embellishment and display.<sup>69</sup>

The sophistication of the argument is immediately apparent, as is the threat the government might have felt in the face of such an argument.

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<sup>69</sup>

Rubin, 60-61.

Hasegawa calls nearly all traditional institutions into question; religion, society, gender, nature, and the Restoration. He also outlines what Japanese Naturalism strives to portray: the representation of what is real and every day.

Serialized novels, as a result of Japanese Naturalism, focused on representing people in their daily lives. The people were the subjects, but the manner in which the people were represented was in a literary manner, despite naturalism's claim for stark representation. Naturalist stories often took the form of the struggle between a person's desires and their responsibilities. Notably, sex played a prominent role, giving the censors more excuses, as if they needed more, to restrict naturalist literature.

Naturalism had a profound effect on serialized novels, just as the Satsuma Rebellion had an effect on Japanese newspapers. However, the two did not independently rise in importance through the Meiji period; they were intimately linked with each other. Serialized novels were indebted to newspapers as a medium to reach the public. And newspapers were equally indebted to serialized novels to resonate with the people and draw in readers.

## Chapter 4

### DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

Form and function play a major role in the reception and understanding of serialized novels. The format of serialized novels, how they appear in newspapers and are delivered to readers, is determined by the cultural expectations of both the medium and the work. Recognizing and understanding the cultural nuances of serialization and the historical context of the work can lend another layer of understanding to our interpretation of these historical serialized novels. The context of a story's production may not lend drastically different readings to the text itself, but the interaction between the text and culture can certainly contribute to our understanding of the forces in play that initially drove the production of the work.

In this section I will outline a historically oriented analysis of *Takahashi Oden* that ties into a larger context of history. I will then describe the historical change that occurred in Meiji newspapers between the two works. This will provide an historical context for the analysis of *Kokoro*. This method will clearly show the change that occurred between the works and their relationship to the larger historical narrative.

Both of these works were created under specific social contexts that influenced the form and style of the work. The actual life, trial, and execution of Takahashi Oden and the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912 are events that cannot be ignored when reading these works. Ignoring this

context removes layers of meaning and takes us further away from understanding. These stories have deep roots to the time and place that they were written. To take them out of that context is to strip them of one layer of meaning and substitute another. This new layer of meaning may produce a different reading or new ideas, but a historically conscientious reading will provide insight beyond the text.

There is nothing inherently negative or positive about choosing one context over another. This happens automatically, even without intent. We as people always bring our own unique experience to bear on literature; historical expertise is just another experience. But our position in relation to the text demands careful attention. It is impossible to recreate the original context of a work, but instead of blindly accepting the context we have inherited from our own cultural and societal background, we can attempt to create a different cultural context that is informed by historical facts to understand these works in relation to each other and to history.

*Takahashi Oden* and *Kokoro* neatly frame the beginning and end of the Meiji period. *Takahashi Oden*, written in 1878, embodies an early style of serialized novel, one still holding many of the traditions of the Edo period. At the time *Takahashi Oden* was written, the newspaper was still an evolving force in Japan; it was defining its role in society. *Takahashi Oden* explored the potential for a new medium with sensational current events in a traditional package. *Kokoro*, written in 1914, is a different story. It represents the close of an era. Newspapers had settled into a

stable position in society. The story does not rely on sensation to spark the interest of the public; it relies on the force of the events themselves and the stable framework created by serializations in Meiji.

*Takahashi Oden yasha monogatari*

*Takahashi Oden* is an early serialization, and it is easy to see this at first glance. Everything about it, the author's introduction, the woodblock-printed illustrations, and the style of prose all date the work to a particular time and place. The early serialized "poison-women" stories, like this one, are relics of a previous age. Edo influences appear in almost all the physical aspects of the work. Yet, they were on the cutting edge of modernity. Newspapers and serializations were only just beginning to take hold and the stories relied on this traditional guise to help connect with readers.

The genre of "poison-women" stories, to which *Takahashi Oden* belongs, flourished in the early Meiji period. *Takahashi Oden* is undoubtedly one of the more famous examples of the genre and helped propel Kanagaki Robun's newspaper to heights of popularity. These are all important facts because the goal of this paper and analysis is to draw conclusions that represent the main thought or mood of the time. The popular nature of the work and its role in advancing the position of the *Kanayomi Shimbun*, a newspaper written and edited by Kanagaki Robun, prove the deep connections the story has with society at the time.



This section will provide a brief introduction of the work to help focus discussion on the relevant information. I will then contextualize *Takahashi Oden* within a historical framework by outlining the influences of serialization and an historical analysis of the work. This will revolve around the influences of Meiji policies on the work. I will subsequently describe how the work related to the social context of the time by exploring the content and the presentation of the story. Finally, I will show how the historical and social contexts reaffirmed the Meiji goal of unification and control.

*Takahashi Oden* was originally serialized in Robun's newspaper *Kanayomi shimbun*, but after two episodes it was moved to a traditional, bound book.<sup>70</sup> This was common for the "poison-women" stories of the time. The first few episodes were serialized and the rest were published in bound installments.<sup>71</sup> This process muddies the lines between the newspaper and traditional woodblock books. Robun mixed the storytelling techniques and vernacular language from books into his newspaper.<sup>72</sup> *Takahashi Oden* blends elements of factual reporting with sensational storytelling, creating a believable and engaging story. He used realistic representation of scenes, and even though he ultimately framed the work in the traditional view of promoting virtue and condemning vice, he

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<sup>70</sup> Christine L. Marran, *Poison Woman: figuring female transgressions in modern Japanese culture*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 7.

<sup>71</sup> Marran, 40.

<sup>72</sup> Marran, 42.

attempted to produce a factual and verifiable account of the events.<sup>73</sup>

Robun made an effort to include factual representations and proof for his claims. Without some of the exaggeration, the novel could easily pass for an extended newspaper article.

There were other serialized accounts of Takahashi Oden in direct competition with Robun's books. The facts in Robun's account conflict with the other serialized accounts and also with the official accounts, but Mark Silver in "The Lies and Connivances of an Evil Woman" summarizes what we do know about Takahashi Oden:

What lies beyond dispute in the existing accounts is precious little: that she was born in the village of Shimomaki-mura in the Tone region of Kōzuke (now Gunma prefecture), that her mother was named Oharu, that in 1872 she left the village for Tokyo together with her husband Naminosuke, that Naminosuke died en route, and that in 1876 she was arrested in Tokyo on charges of seducing, stabbing to death, and robbing a moneylender and used clothing dealer named Gotō Kichizō 後藤吉蔵. For her part, Oden claimed that Gotō had tried to rape her at knifepoint, and that in the ensuing struggle, he fatally stabbed himself in the throat. When she

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<sup>73</sup> Mark Silver, "The Lies and Connivances of an Evil Woman: early Meiji realism and 'The Tale of Takahashi Oden the She-Devil,'" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 63 (Jun., 2003): 5-67.

was finally put on trial three years after her arrest, she was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death by beheading.<sup>74</sup>

Robun explores every aspect of the official accounts and delves into Takahashi's whole life from early childhood in Shimonomaki-mura up to her capture and beheading in Tokyo.

Robun creates a literary Takahashi in his writings. He begins detailing her evil even before she is born. Robun criticizes her mother as a morally corrupt woman and the source of Takahashi's evil nature. Takahashi is made out to be a tomboyish young girl who takes advantage of the other children in her village. She grows up and is married off to Naminosuke, another in a long list of unsavory characters. Naminosuke contracts leprosy, and to be rid of the financial burden this entails, she poisons him on the way to Tokyo. She escapes and eventually finds her way to Tokyo and continues her life of petty crime and prostitution. Robun portrays her as a conniving criminal, who takes advantage of people's trust in her. At first, Gotō appears to be just another person she plans to take advantage of. She lures Gotō to an inn by telling him she set up a favorable trade between him and a friend. This friend obviously never shows up, and Takahashi lies again, telling Gotō that he will be coming the next day. Takahashi then gets Gotō drunk and acts like she is seducing him. He falls asleep, and as she moves to get in bed with him, she cuts his throat and

steals his money. Takahashi leaves a note claiming that the murder was a revenge killing because Gotō raped her sister. She escapes but is soon captured, imprisoned, tried, and later beheaded.

The style of writing in *Takahashi Oden* is geared specifically for the newspaper reader of the popular, lowbrow *koshimbun*. In the author's note at the beginning, Robun sets himself up in the same language as earlier *ukyozōshi* texts did. Each book contained one or two illustrated pages and the first two books were printed with movable type. Later books reverted to the traditional method of woodblock printing. The writing style is typical for the *gōkan* genre; the prose is in a vernacular style with little direct quotations. And it is supplemented by furigana to aid readers. *Gōkan* were bound books characterized by bright covers with images of women on them. This genre appealed to the masses and consistently used vernacular language.

In "Poison Woman" Marran cites literacy rates of around 75 percent in Tokyo in 1876.<sup>75</sup> However, with the thousands of kanji in use before the standardization of the writing system, literacy could fall within a large spectrum of functionality. The furigana readings allowed the lowest educated reader greater access to the text. This level of reading assistance was probably not necessary for the well-educated elite because they would have had a better education and thus a higher functional literacy.

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Marran, 41.

The story provides another viewpoint on an uncertain situation. A situation where no one knew the objective truth and the story exploited the sense of uncertainty to provide a convincing story of events. However, it was by no means a pure picture of reality, and the *Kanayomi shimbun's* search for readers was not uncontested. Alongside Robun's account, another by Okamoto Kisen (1879 – 1879) was competing for readers. Sensational serializations like these competed for readers, expanding the role and reach of newspapers in society. Unlike later works, there was little government censorship, and publishers immediately saw the appeal of these stories and brought them into a longer format than a newspaper serialization.

Serialization had a profound impact on the form of *Takahashi Oden*. The work had to contend with governmental regulations, reader interactions, and publisher's expectations. The Meiji state inherited much of the system of censorship and regulation from the shogunate government. The policies of the shogunate were carried over, in a more restrained way into the Meiji period. However, the Meiji government seemed reluctant at first to bring a heavy hand in censorship. The early “poison-women” serializations like *Takahashi Oden* were left alone. However, *Takahashi Oden* is closely related to the Edo period literature that also made it through the censors, in a time that was arguably stricter than the early days of Meiji. Essentially, *Takahashi Oden* was from the lineage of texts that were designed to make it past the censors.

In addition to the government, *Takahashi Oden* was influenced by what Robun and the publisher anticipated the reader's response would be. The story is not a single narrative to divulge the information of Takahashi in a quick and efficient manner. Instead, the story milks every twist and turn, expanding the story beyond all proportion of what the news story was about. The trial of Takahashi was only concerned with her murder of Gotō, but *Takahashi Oden* meandered through her life, expanding on every rumor and supposed encounter. Moving from a newspaper serialization to a bound book allowed Robun the space and time to flesh the books out, padding the story essentially. The middle books are almost completely tangential to the narrative.

The anticipation of being able to sell more copies of books encouraged both the author and the publisher to subscribe to this format. Extending the story by exploring every detail and publishing multiple books was intended to milk the audience for money. Profits were first and foremost on the minds of the creators of the work.

Within the work itself, there is a distinct Meiji influence running throughout. The Meiji period progressed with a steady drumbeat toward the adoption of many new and different Western ideas. In *Takahashi Oden* science is a steady rock behind the whole narrative and Western ideas are idealized and unquestioned. Reason, science, and logic were all introduced and touted as the cutting edge of human advancement. The Meiji government and the Japanese people were importing these ideas

wholesale, and they were incorporating them into the fabric of their society. *Takahashi Oden* is built on these ideas. The frame of the story is an explanation of the nature of this woman and her actions; it is to understand the why of her actions, not just the actions themselves. The frame provides logical proof and a scientific analysis of the woman and her actions, not merely a description of the actions.

Robun explores Takahashi's parents, seedy characters according to him. But also according to new social and biological theories, including the theory of evolution, this exploration into Takahashi's parentage has real weight behind it. It is reason and logic at work. They begin to explain what makes a criminal. Science was on the rise, and biology and inheritance were strong theories in early Meiji. They lent weight to Robun's argument and validity to his story. Without qualifications, Robun becomes an expert, relating relevant facts and information to the non-elite public.

Robun describes an autopsy after she was killed that describes her as having large amounts of brain tissue, fat, and a high libido, but all these physical defects are hidden from view and only discovered after she is killed.<sup>76</sup> Her abnormal description enhances the realism of the story and provides a reason for her actions. It also allows the public to disassociate themselves from her. Because of her physical abnormalities, people reading the story can write off her actions as a product of this defect. This

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<sup>76</sup> *Meiji bunka zenshū* vol. 2 (Tokyo: Nihon Hyōronsha, 1992-1993), 61.

allows readers to feel like they have a safe separation between themselves and Takahashi's actions.

There are several social issues that crop up in *Takahashi Oden*, and they describe a social system broken down and on the brink. The story examines the underworld beyond the ideals of Meiji. This world, Takahashi's world, is violent in all aspects. Takahashi is alternately a cheat, a thief, a prostitute, and a murderer.

Takahashi is constantly seen taking advantage of everyone foolish enough to fall into her traps. She uses every resource available, and Robun does not shy away from this. Takahashi uses her sexuality to entrap men into trusting her. She works as a prostitute, and even then she swindles customers and makes off with a bounty. Her murder of Gotō is carried out with the underlying narrative of a seduction. Takahashi is almost completely incapable of accepting a stable relationship into her life. The supposed rock of society, marriage, is no safe haven either. She murders her husband for an immediate profit and she moves on to other men. Her world is violent and unstable.

Robun wrestles this unstable world into the narrative with a frame that limits the story's reach. Science and Western thinking are combined with the traditional view of promoting virtue and punishing vice to create a strong limit to the story. Without this limiting frame, the story threatens to overwhelm the reader. The world presented in *Takahashi Oden* is so violent and chaotic at every turn, that without an outside perspective,



readers are prone to be lost in the carnage. The traditional frame of promoting virtue and punishing vice is a throwback to the Edo period, a relic of the Tokugawa censorship policies that carried over into Meiji. Robun uses this to reassure readers that the world is indeed ordered. The chaos of the story is countered by the expectation and fulfillment of justice at the end. Western thought reinforces this frame by further removing the subject from the realm of normality. Takahashi is made out to be a genetically and physiologically deranged person, only capable of these actions because biological factors forced her hand. The idea of inevitability, of the natural course of action, here removes Takahashi's actions from the realm of the everyday. The reader cannot possibly identify with or even dream of carrying out similar actions because they do not have the abnormal make up that Takahashi did. The gulf between the reader and Takahashi is made to be as wide as possible so the reader can understand her chaotic life without being subject to self-doubt.

*Takahashi Oden* appeals to readers on a basic level. The story touches on the most primal urges of people; the most base and easily understood emotions. Takahashi may be portrayed as an undesirable character, but she is not difficult to understand. Her violent and chaotic nature is reinforced throughout the entire story.

Robun's frame provides a safe distance from which to view this world. Traditionally, promoting virtue and condemning vice is a meaningless trope intended to move the story past the censors, but in this

case, it is doing more than that. It offsets the chaos of Takahashi's life and highlights the stable nature of normal society. This novel defined Japanese society and what it meant to be Japanese.

Society is an imagined social construct that only exists when everyone thinks about society in the same way. Our thoughts about society are guided by our understanding of what is and is not normal. The feedback we get on our reactions to social events constructs an image of society. Takahashi was a woman at the edge of society, clearly a criminal and a despicable person. *Takahashi Oden* embraces the edge of society where Takahashi lives by shining a light on what exists there.

Her actions were portrayed to horrify anyone who heard, yet Takahashi is a member of Japanese society. Society's core is most clearly defined in the identification of what the periphery is.

It is unlikely that anyone had any serious questions about the morality of Takahashi's actions. However, this reaction is what identifies this text as important to the social framework of Japan. Robun's frame merely echoes what readers already know and understand, but we are reassured by the frame that our initial, innate reactions are good and proper. Her actions fell outside the bounds of normal, but we know and understand the bounds of normal because of our adherence to society's norms.

The Meiji goal of the unification and solidification of a Japanese nation on the world stage is furthered by this work. By identifying with a

common revulsion against Takahashi and her actions, society pulls together against her and other outsiders. Newspapers and serializations like this showed Japanese readers what they had in common with each other. Japanese in the cities and the country could identify with the same set of values in opposition to foreign and domestic outsiders.

The story highlights society's fascination with itself. The huge interest in this and other stories of societal extremes shows that the citizens that comprise society are interested in themselves. The people want reassurance that their desires, hates, grudges, and all the other feelings that make up life, are justified. They want to be reassured that their lives are normal. This kind of story reassures the populous by describing in detail strange and abnormal behavior. Readers interact with other members of society and find that their reactions are in step with everyone else's reactions. This kind of reassurance and affirmation helps to solidify society as one homogeneous unit. It gathers the geographically separate parts of society and brings them together. This is a pivotal process in the definition of who was "Japanese" and how far "Japan" extended. With the Meiji Revolution supplanting nearly three-hundred years of stability, surging Western influence and domestic revolts left the population yearning for stability.

*Takahashi Oden* is an example of the drive, conscious or unconscious, to centralize Japanese culture under the banners of the idea of a Japanese nation. The newspapers appealed to the widest possible

audience, it covered the widest swaths of society, and helped to define society. Reading the newspaper was being a part of society in Japan and knowing what it was to be Japanese. By providing an outlet for public fear and also the definition of society, newspapers attracted readers who just wanted to be a part of that society. In the quest for profit, newspapers sought out both articles and stories that appealed to the most basic instincts of the people. The semi-fictional “poison-women” stories that appeared in serializations were the perfect appeal to new and old readers of newspapers. These stories used the truth to evoke a strong reaction from readers. The facts of the lives of these women struck readers close to home. At the same time, the stories allowed people in society to come together and react as one to these gruesome accounts, solidifying their ties to each other and strengthening society against outsiders.

### *Kokoro*

How then does Sōseki’s *Kokoro* compare with *Takahashi Oden*?

The two works together span almost the entire Meiji period. From *Takahashi Oden* to *Kokoro* spans from 1878 to 1914; the two neatly frame an important time of development from beginning to the end of the Meiji period. *Kokoro* provides valuable insight into the changes that occurred over the course of the Meiji era. *Kokoro* was serialized in the *Asahi shimbun*; the *Asahi* was one of the largest and most popular newspapers at the time; it cut across a broad swath of society. As such, *Kokoro* is similar to *Takahashi Oden* in many respects. However, there are profound

differences between the works that portray the vast shift that occurred over the course of the Meiji period. The public, the press, and the state all matured considerably over this span of time, and the social structure shifted from nation building to nation maintaining.

When considering the literature of the late Meiji period, Sōseki's name immediately comes to mind. He had an enormous impact on Japanese literature at the time and in subsequent years. Selecting a work by Sōseki offers some distinct advantages. *Kokoro* is one of the more well know and popular Japanese novels, even today. *Kokoro* had a broad readership, one that was reflective of the readership of the *Asahi Shimbun*, one of the larger papers at the time. Of course by using *Kokoro* as a representative example we are forcing Sōseki to represent groups much larger and diverse than himself.

*Kokoro* is the story of a college student and his friendship with an older man, "Sensei", at the end of the Meiji period. This student, known in the novel only as "I", meets Sensei on a beach in Kamakura. On returning to Tokyo, he persists in befriending Sensei despite Sensei's resistance. Sensei is a quiet, secretive person; "I" is drawn to the air of unknown surrounding Sensei. Soon after "I"'s graduation, he is summoned home to tend to his ailing father. Around this time Emperor Meiji dies, and General Nogi Maresuke, a famous general, follows the Emperor in death by committing ritual suicide. "I" receives a telegram from Sensei asking him to come back to Tokyo, but with his father on the verge of death, "I"

refuses. Sensei sends a letter to “I” that begins, “I shall in all likelihood be dead by the time this reaches you.” “I” rushes away from his father back to Tokyo and Sensei. On the train ride, he reads the letter.

The letter explains Sensei’s story from his school days and why he withdrew from the world like he did. Sensei explains his childhood, much like “I”s. Sensei is sent to Tokyo to be educated, but his parents die and he is taken in by his uncle who continues to fund Sensei’s education. This uncle proposes a marriage between Sensei and his daughter. Sensei refuses and senses a change in attitude in his uncle. His uncle is no longer the supportive, accommodating person he was, but is now reserved and cool. Sensei’s uncle refuses to give Sensei his full inheritance, and Sensei sets off for Tokyo feeling cheated and taken advantage of.

Sensei eventually finds a house inhabited by a woman and her daughter where he rents a room. He slowly develops a relationship with the woman and her daughter, and begins to take a romantic interest in the daughter. Sensei then invites a friend, “K”, to stay with him at the house. “K” moves in and Sensei realizes that “K” is beginning to fall in love with the daughter also. Eventually, Sensei asks the woman for her daughter’s hand in marriage only after ridiculing the stoic “K” for his attachment to the daughter. The woman and her daughter accept Sensei’s proposal, but later the same night “K” kills himself in his room. Sensei is left wracked with guilt, fearing that his ridiculing and denying “K” the woman he was interested in caused him to kill himself. Sensei goes on to write that he has

kept the whole affair secret from everyone, including his wife, and that he wants “I” to take care of his wife after he is gone.

*Kokoro* touches on important themes that speak to the core of Meiji society: the city-country dynamic, education, sickness and loss, familial relations, and the ruler subject relationship. *Kokoro* reaches broadly into the fabric of society to portray many aspects of life in Japan at the end of the Meiji era. The most central event of the period was the death of Emperor Meiji. Over the course of his reign, Japan changed more than it had in generations. The very structure of society was torn down and rebuilt. The fundamental changes affected everyone in the country, no matter how distant or remote. The one static point in all of this change had been the Emperor, and he had been a prominent public figure. Emperor Meiji developed an almost personal connection with the Japanese people, and he was built up to be the untouchable anchor of Japanese society by the state. I emphasize this point to draw attention to the profound sense of loss that the characters demonstrate in *Kokoro*. Meiji’s death is a pivot in the novel and in history; it was a profound shared experience among all Japanese.

The social structure supporting newspapers and their role in society had fundamentally changed by the time *Kokoro* was written. Newspapers were well established in society and had significant influence and power in the public sphere. The government was taking a serious look at newspapers and serializations and their influence on society. The

serializations were more closely identifying with the public and their everyday lives, and the publishers were using all of this to sell papers.

*Takahashi Oden* had a relatively free hand in terms of government censorship. The mood of the time allowed works like *Takahashi Oden* to make it through the system unscathed. *Kokoro* was operating in a different environment. The government's slow build up and continual exercise of censorship powers continued past the Meiji period, but *Kokoro* was written in an environment where novels were being heavily censored without real identification of the offending material. Naturalism faced much of the wrath of the censors, but lewd material and political ideas, especially liberal ideas, were also targets.

*Kokoro* weaved its way through the delicate minefield that was the system of Meiji censorship. *Kokoro* has material that dances dangerously close to possible offensive material. The story addresses the death of Emperor Meiji and General Nogi's suicide directly. Although the death of Emperor Meiji was treated with great respect and remorse, General Nogi's suicide was a more contentious issue. At the time, General Nogi's suicide was seen as an anachronistic act, a throwback to the Japan that Meiji had supplanted. The government condemned the act, and *Kokoro* walks the middle of the line on the issue. Nogi's suicide appears in the story, but there is little commentary on the merits or worthiness of the act. Similarly, *Kokoro* addresses the subject of young love, but the discussion never descends into the explicit or even suggestive. It is impossible to definitively



attribute these characteristics to the pressure of the climate of censorship, but what can be said is that *Kokoro* made it past the censors, and the censors had ultimate control to ban disagreeable content.

The same ideas that might spark a censor's interest were also the ideas that appealed to readers. The death of Emperor Meiji was a monumental event that interested and was understood by all readers. Young love and relationships are also things that have near universal understanding. These relevant themes were draws to readers who wanted to know and understand more about themselves and their countrymen. And again, the publishers go along for the ride, as long as they are making a profit.

The social influences of serialization on *Kokoro* were similar to those on *Takahashi Oden*. Both works had to contend with the threat of censorship, and appealing to a mass audience. However, the way these two works carried out the same tasks illuminates the dramatic social change that occurred in just 30 years. Where *Takahashi Oden* is explicit and graphic in exploring the underworld of society, *Kokoro* is reserved. Where *Takahashi Oden* grabs onto the central event of the day and embraces the controversy, *Kokoro* only touches on the subject in passing, avoiding the controversial aspects. *Kokoro* was under threat from a much more active and sophisticated censorship system, but *Kokoro* also had a more sophisticated audience. The audience did not need to be hit over the head with the controversy and every detail of the event. They had read about the

events in the newspapers and knew the details. They were an informed public that was looking less for new information and thrills and more for a nuanced view of events.

The waxing and waning of social forces in Meiji gives rise to another significant comparison between the two works. As Meiji progressed and synthesized the influx of Western ideas and technology, the novelty of the whole experience wore off. There are always people who resisted new ideas, and there are always people who only took to new ideas after social pressure. However, for the majority, the novelty and the progress of ideas was enough to cast an air of the fantastic over anything Western. This viewpoint, prominent in *Takahashi Oden*, is shown in *Kokoro* to have lost its luster.

The rise of naturalism accompanied the fall of the Western mystique. Science and technology were the hot new topic at the start of Meiji, but naturalism began to illuminate life as it was lived for the Japanese people. Science was an ideal, not a practical description of everyday life. In *Kokoro*, “I” is left wondering what his degree is even worth to him. A university degree, and the university system itself, is a pure product of Western influence on the education system in Japan. “I” seems to take no solace or comfort in the knowledge he acquired at the university. His parents are overjoyed at his graduation, but he never joins them in valuing his achievement. He takes such little notice of the honors of the degree that he allows it to be damaged on the train ride back to his

parent's home in the country.<sup>77</sup> “I”, in contrast to his parents who are from an earlier generation, is not interested in what a university degree confers.

“I” seems only to take comfort in his relationship with Sensei. “I” finds that his academic knowledge provides no relief or rest from the nagging doubts and emotional trials of life. He cannot apply his learning to his daily life, it is too remote, and so he sees little meaning in it. Sensei's deep emotional problems provide a window into his own disappointments in life. His relationship with Sensei provides the spiritual and emotional foundation that he lacked in his education. Sensei's deep well of emotion gives meaning and contextualizes his life. Scientific understanding and reason have no bearing on his life, and only the comfort of another who has found education to be empty provides him with any relief.

Furthermore, “I”'s first glimpse of Sensei and what attracts his attention is the Westerner who is accompanying Sensei. Sensei and his guest go swimming, and later “I” sees Sensei again on the beach but without the Westerner. “I” is unconcerned about the Westerner, and he continues to be interested in Sensei. “I”'s attitude reflects the shift from the West to Japan. The Westerner with Sensei is not the focus of “I”'s attention, even though his presence stands out as noteworthy. Sensei, the Japanese, is the object of interest.

The West has not completely disappeared in *Kokoro*, nor had it disappeared in Japan near the end of Meiji. The West has dissolved into

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<sup>77</sup> Edwin McClellan, trans. *Kokoro: a novel and selected essays* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1992), 78-79.

the fabric of Meiji society; it is just another fact of life. In *Takahashi Oden*, Western thought was the basis for the entire story. Logic, proof, justice, and science were the hallmarks of an advanced and enlightened outlook. In *Kokoro*, this mystique has broken down. People began to turn inwards, to look to themselves. The emotional world inside their minds could not be explained by the new Western science, so Western science was relegated to one part of society. “I” has as much knowledge of the West as anyone else, but he turns from this path to seek comfort in Sensei.

There are a number of other social themes that are emphasized in *Kokoro*. Overall, *Kokoro* depicts stability in society that is completely unmatched in *Takahashi Oden*. Relationships are much more restrained in *Kokoro*, and even death is treated in a way that minimizes the tragedy of the event.

The primary romantic relationship in *Kokoro* is that between Sensei and his wife. We see these two people as a peaceful couple. The two evidently care about each other, and despite Sensei's secrets, his final thoughts are to ask “I” to take care of his wife after he has died. He even spares her from having to discover his body by sending her on a vacation. In the novel, the relationship between Sensei and his wife is a stabilizing force. The two are a static pair through the story until Sensei commits suicide. We discover the only disruption to this in Sensei's letter to “K”. “K”'s interest in the woman who will become Sensei's wife causes disorder in an environment that was previously ordered. This uncertainty and

chaos is eventually what forces Sensei's hand in proposing to his wife. This series of events leads to "K"'s death, Sensei's enduring guilt, and eventual death. Although the whole affair ends in death, in the time between, the married relationship is seen as a stabilizing force in society. *Takahashi Oden* does not follow the same example; chaos and disorder plague every relationship in the story. Nothing lasts long and everything ends violently.

The central event in both of the works, death, is another prime example of this phenomenon. The death of Emperor Meiji in *Kokoro* is a restrained affair, with quiet grief being exhibited by all. General Nogi's suicide is a departure from the almost tranquil portrayal of Meiji's death, but it is soon glossed over. And the death of "I"'s father is a peaceful passing, and Sensei's suicide is also passed over quickly in favor of his testament. It is difficult to portray death as a positive force, but in comparison to *Takahashi Oden*, death in *Kokoro* seems a natural part of life. It seems that every character in *Takahashi Oden* comes to a violent and unpleasant end.

*Kokoro* provides a definition of society that is based on inclusion. Readers can readily identify with the characters and the events spark a shared memory. *Kokoro*'s focus is on the ordinary citizen. "I" and his family could represent the experiences of any number of the young men who traveled to Tokyo from the countryside to find education and employment. This is a fundamental change from *Takahashi Oden*, where the story focused on the outcasts of society. *Kokoro* is a story that is

immediately approachable and demonstrates the uncertainty and the loss that life brings everyone. *Kokoro* defines what it is to be Japanese instead of defining what it is to not be Japanese. We feel for, we identify with, and we relate to the characters, their grief, and their daily lives. We see ourselves in them and imagine ourselves faced with the same devastation and loss. *Kokoro* identifies the core of Japanese society and invites readers to share in the emotions of the group as a unified whole. In essence, *Kokoro* unites readers with a shared reaction surrounding a monumental event. The focus is on the accepted, the center, and the normal. Readers, encouraged in this way, are drawn toward a Meiji ideal, a Japanese ideal.

*Takahashi Oden* is the opposite. It defines society based on the outliers. We see the extremes and recognize our place in the center in opposition to these strange and singular events that define the borders of our existence. We see the outsiders and consider ourselves lucky to be on the inside. The story is not surprising or shocking in plot, only in the extreme nature of the actions of the characters. As normal members of society, we cannot imagine ourselves in the story as we can in *Kokoro*.

## Chapter 5

### CONCLUSION

The Meiji period was a time of unprecedented change in the course of Japanese history. There were few, if any, social institutions left untouched by the forces of change. Newspapers were a product of this turbulent time, a product that began as a poorly understood, imported medium that simultaneously appealed to both the elite and the common folk of the Japanese population. This was only possible because newspapers reflected the public, and the public itself was a divided body. As the public grew and changed, newspapers followed this progress, growing and changing as well.

Both these serialized stories recount a real event as the basis for rooting the story in truth. The event in *Kokoro* is the death of Meiji. Meiji's death and Nogi's suicide are the central points in the novel, and Takahashi's murder of Gotō serves the same function in *Takahashi Oden*. But the events and the way they are represented have different connotations. *Takahashi Oden* is about the central event of the story; we are a third party observer able to sit in on this grotesque play unfolding in front of us. We are told a story that we did not fully know; *Takahashi Oden* is the fictionalization of the event itself. On the other hand, *Kokoro* does not inform us about Meiji's death. It is about the reactions and grief of the characters and of society as a whole. *Kokoro* is a fictional reaction to an

event, not the event itself. We are “I”, Sensei, and the general public reacting to the death of Meiji and mourning the end of an era.

Serialized novels reflected the change in Japan from early Meiji; breaking out of the old Edo mold, to late Meiji; entering into the world as a serious player on the international stage. The progress from *Takahashi Oden* to *Kokoro* is as dramatic as it is revealing. Under pressure to rapidly modernize in the face of world events, Japanese society had no choice but to evolve alongside the new, imported technology and ideas. Social separation broke down slowly and ushered in an inclusive view of Japan. *Takahashi Oden* draws a sharp contrast between the characters in the novel and “normal” society. Takahashi is an outcast from the start, someone to be ridiculed and looked down upon. *Kokoro* inverts this thinking. The characters are “normal” society, and we are encouraged to participate with them in understanding society and our acceptance in that society.

Newspapers helped the people develop a sense of identity and nationality. For the Meiji state and beyond, this was an important piece in the public's perception of itself and the government's manipulation of the public. The press was a fundamental element of the modern state that Japan wanted to become in the Meiji period. Newspapers had their finger on the pulse of the nation, and without the cooperation of the government or the intent to do so, the newspapers helped solidify government control over Japan. The Meiji state was primarily concerned with unifying Japan,



socially and geographically. The government's own education policies helped to fulfill this goal, but the newspaper was a prime force behind this movement.

Early Meiji was fractured; split between two extremes. Commercial stories and papers like *Takahashi Oden* and the *Kanayomi shimbun* clashed with high-minded political papers. Led by a few individuals and working within the ebb and flow of cultural change and the threat of government censorship, the papers transformed themselves. A new form emerged that combined the two extremes of commercial and idealistic print and ushered in era of the modern Japanese newspaper.

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